

# REALITY CHECK

SEPT 25  
WEEK 8

Discovering life's meaning  
in the book of Ecclesiastes

## Ultimate > Immediate

"We often try to turn **good** things into **ultimate** things: money, pleasure, sex, success, power, etc. Instead of seeing those as gifts from God to be used as he intended, we see them as ultimate and seek to get from them what they cannot give."

- Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus In Ecclesiastes* (2016)

### Ecclesiastes 7:1-6 *Beginning at the End*

<sup>1</sup> A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth. <sup>2</sup> It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart. <sup>3</sup> Frustration is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart. <sup>4</sup> The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure. <sup>5</sup> It is better to heed the rebuke of a wise person than to listen to the song of fools. <sup>6</sup> Like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of fools. *This too is meaningless.*

All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. If only we knew the power of your anger! Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due. **Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.** Psalm 90:9-12

### Ecclesiastes 7:7-14 *Consider With Caution*

<sup>7</sup> Extortion turns a wise person into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart. <sup>8</sup> The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride. <sup>9</sup> Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. <sup>10</sup> Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions. <sup>11</sup> Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. <sup>12</sup> Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it. <sup>13</sup> *Consider* what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? <sup>14</sup> When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, *consider* this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future.

"The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us. These things are good images of what we really desire; but, if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols breaking the hearts of their worshippers."

- C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (1975)

### Ecclesiastes 7:15-18, 29 *"Too Righteous!?"*

<sup>15</sup> In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: the righteous perishing in their righteousness, and the wicked living long in their wickedness. <sup>16</sup> Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise— why destroy yourself? <sup>17</sup> Do not be overwicked, and do not be a fool— why die before your time? <sup>18</sup> It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.

<sup>29</sup> This *only* have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes."

"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and **now something greater than Solomon is here.**"

- Jesus (Matthew 12:40-42)